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Buffalo Belles

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MAY 2000



THE JOURNEY

NEWSLETTER OF THE BUFFALO BELLES

Inside this issue:

Camille's Corner	2
Miss Suzi Interview	3
Nancy's Perspective	4
Trans Community News	5
Community & Interpersonal Differences	6
For A Better You	7
Coming Events	10

- THE MAY MEETING OF THE BUFFALO BELLES HAS BEEN CHANGED TO THE FIRST SATURDAY, MAY 6. THE CHANGE IS ONLY FOR THIS MONTH.
- SPRING CLEANING TRANS-FLEA APPAREL MARKET AT THE MAY 6 BELLES MEETING. BRING YOUR STUFF OR TAKE HOME A CLOTHING, WIG OR JEWELRY TREASURE.

KATHY'S NOTES



Dear Sisters,

We had a nice turnout for our April meeting, other than by the "officers" of the group that is. Patti and Camille couldn't make it at all, and Kathy finally arrived just about the time that the pizza was being picked up. Guess they were all scared away by the snow that came in that evening. Isn't it kind of weird that we never had weather affect us during the winter months, and come spring time and we start to get the snow. At least we didn't get that 17" that night, like they did over in Albany.

Do appreciate the way that a couple of the girls took over to get things going for us. A tip of the Easter Bonnet to Nancy, Jo, Joan, and Karoline for collecting the money, getting things organized and conducting a brief meeting. See how easy it is? Watch out girls, or Camille will be putting the strong arm on you at the next meeting to become an officer.

As Camille mentioned last month, it is time for some others to get involved and carry the banner for awhile. I mean, after seven years, some of you must be getting really tired of reading my drivel each month and can add a breath of fresh air to the group.

All of us evolve in different ways and our paths change with time. Camille wants to spend more time with out-reach in the community. Patti has her family respon-

sibilities and work load increasingly cutting into her time. And I have a new career and my transition that has become my number one focus. It is time for us to have others take over the reigns.

This is really a good time for this to happen. Membership in the group, even with those that we lost during the recent renewal period, is at a high. Our treasury is in good shape. All the infrastructure is in place. But what is needed is a renewal that comes with change. A renewal that comes with youthful exuberance, not from an attitude like mine which has slowly turned into a "Did it before, got the Tee shirt" type attitude. It certainly doesn't take much talent - if I'm not a prime example of that, what is? Camille should have more about the upcoming election.

MAY MEETING: Just a reminder, the May meeting is moved to the first Saturday of the month - the Sixth this time only. Sorry Rochchacharians for this.

PERSONAL SAFETY: Recently Camille wrote about the need to keep in mind your safety when out on the town. I just wish to add a little foot note to her and Kali's comments. I have a neighbor who is with the Buffalo Police who I am quite out and friendly with. In a recent conversation he told me the most common place that the "date rape" drug has been used in is the gay bars, and in particular Club Marcella. He was warning me, as a caring friend, and I am in turn in passing it along. Don't leave your drinks unattended! .

April attendance:

Jo S.	Jo S.
Kathy L.	Jennifer G. (guest)
Gina A.	Victoria C.
Susan R.	Giullia M.
Karoline O.	Ann Z.
Nancy W.	Bobbi S.
Joan & Jill	Michelle & Sue
Kendra K.	Brenda C.-Debutante!



CAMILLE'S CORNER

I need you. No really. I need you. How could I be so forward? Why would

I make such a plea? If you were among the 17 that attended last month's meeting, you noticed the Belles' officers were absent. Patti and myself were involved with other aspects of a busy weekend. And Kathy was able to make the meeting a little later. But why tell you this? So we missed a meeting or two. (I won't even mention YOUR attendance at the meetings.) Things got done didn't they? The meeting had a beginning, a middle and an end, didn't it? Most seemed happy. There was a little griping but hey, the pizza did eventually make an appearance. But is that what you want to settle for? Pizza and a place to look pretty? Don't any of you have any ideas, issues, goals, objectives, aspirations or dreams as to where and how the Belles can proceed? I do, but I can't do it alone. I need you.

Many of you know that I have chosen to devote my time and energy to community outreach - something we have ignored up to this time. One such effort was a few ago when I, along with Patti and Holly, attended the Out, Loud and Proud 2000 Conference at the University of Buffalo. I'll discuss that a little later.

If it sounds that there is an urgency to this situation, there is. It is about the "changing of the guard". We need new people to step up and contribute some part of themselves to the business of running the Buffalo Belles. We need individuals for the office of president, vice-president and treasurer. These are not hard jobs but they are positions that require some commitment. The commitment that insures that the Belles will continue to exist and fulfill its mission - to provide information for the transgendered people of Buffalo and WNY; to provide support and advice to all who are transgendered, as well as to family and friends; and to be a social group because we recognize that everyone needs to have friends and fun. The Belles were there for you when you made that call to inquire about who we are and what we could do for you. Now it's time to

return something to the Belles. Go to page 5, fill it out and return the form that says you care. After all, this is important to you, isn't it?

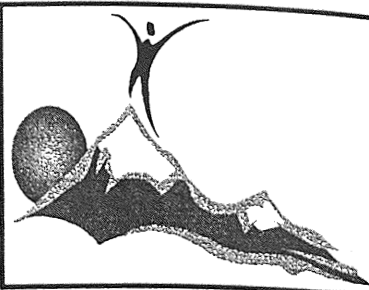
As with many of the events that we inform you about, you need to call either the Helpline or the event itself, in order to verify time and place, due to the possibility of last minute changes. The shopping party at Shirley's Attic, previously scheduled for April 30, is a case in point. It was canceled suddenly. We tried to inform as many as possible, i.e. e-mail, phone, word of mouth. I apologize if you went and were met by a locked door. More often than not, the event goes on as planned. For those looking to attend another shopping party, we plan to announce the rescheduling soon.

The Out, Loud and Proud 2000 Conference was held April 14 - 16, at the University of Buffalo Main Street campus. More than 150 attended the three day event. We (Patti, Holly and myself) met some wonderful people and learned about various aspects of the gay, lesbian, bi and transgendered community. Even though most of the seminars and meetings were geared towards the GLB community, there was a fascinating slide show conducted by Loren Cameron, a F to M transsexual. I met the president and some members of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) and we talked about the needs and concerns of families of transgendered people. PFLAG doesn't have much TG background and sometimes refer individuals to the Buffalo Belles. I will be attending their next meeting to discuss what both of our groups can do for each other.

Talking with the conference coordinator was very productive as we now have an early commitment to present a segment at next year's event. Further good news is that the student LGBA (Lesbian, Gay Bi Alliance) has agreed to make available our informational literature to any Trans student who inquires at their office. Next semester we are planning to do a Buffalo Belles literature drop at the dorms and student union.

I met Rick Landman, the founder of the university's first gay student organization, who is trying to form an alumni group. And this time it will include the transgendered as well. If you are a graduate of the Univ. of Buffalo, as I am, let me know.

I'll discuss more at the next meeting on May 6. See you there.



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(For those who did not see the recent Buffalo Beat article interviewing one of our members, we are featuring it here.)

BRINGING DIGNITY TO PEOPLES LIVES

By Jennifer Munkelt
Buffalo Beat 3/23-29/2000

TV CD TS or just curious? Many of us have seen such acronyms at one time or another, many more of us would admit to having little to no understanding of what they actually mean.



For many individuals however, such acronyms reflect a lifestyle often only whispered of, yet, finally, slowly, gaining acceptance in mainstream society.

One major force in bringing the art (and it is an art) of crossdressing to the public is the ever feminine Miss Suzi. Celebrating its one year anniversary this week, Miss Suzi's Boutique, Studio and Salon of Fantasy Fashions offers the best in complete head-to-toe crossdressing, as well as makeovers and feminization training.

Previously working in the biology and environmental science fields, one year ago Miss Suzi made a life changing decision, opening her boutique, originally, for 'selfish' reasons "I wanted to make a living and have a chance to be myself" she explained, "it hurts sometimes to pick up and change your life and do what you have to do. But biology is good, biology is very good because it gives you a good grasp of life and helps to figure out a lot of people...to help them make sense."

Her boutique has quickly gained popularity, offering Buffalobians a chance to shop in a friendly, discreet atmosphere. One of only a few shops of its kind in the US, Miss Suzi works with each customer individually, helping to add "a little dignity to people's lives". Her shop offers a wide range of dresses, from the most demure to the outright wild, as well as a wide selection of sky high heels, wigs, makeup, swimwear, corsets and lingerie, in sizes suitable for men and women alike. "If it ain't sexy it's cheap" miss Suzi exclaims, and you won't find anything cheap in her shop, as all products are guaranteed by Miss Suzi herself.

The salon also offers makeovers and beauty training, to help each guest reach their full potential of beauty and style. Photographs of guests in their newly transformed ensembles are always included, and by the examples offered in the photo album available for customers perusal, Miss Suzi's talent and experience are evident.

The boutique offers a wide range of spa-type packages as well, with three different levels of beauty sessions, starting with the one-hour dutchess session, all the way to Queen for a Day, which includes an all day dress-up session and a Night on the Town.

Not just a boutique and salon however, feminization training is also available for an individual looking to become in touch with their feminine characteristics. Miss Suzi cites the film *To Wong Foo, Thanks For Everything, Julie Newmar* (1995) as an example. She explains, "in the film, what did the drag queens do? They came into town and empowered the women, and what a wonderful thing that is." She continues, "We try to teach femininity in every sense of the word. Many people think femininity is this (holding up a frilly lace petticoat) and that's not it, it has to do with grandma coming home from the war with slivers of glass in her hands from making bullets, that's femininity. The pain of motherhood and birth, that's femininity."

There is no question that, through her shop and its customers and the energy surrounding her, femininity thrives in her presence. And through her positive and accepting attitude, Miss Suzi is working to help other find the comfortable lifestyle that she enjoys. "Maybe the world is getting more accepting. A lot of people come in here, and they may not know that the world is more accepting these days...and they need to know so that they don't spend thirty or forty years in the closet" she stated. And with the median age of Miss Suzi customers between 35-50 years old (though a lady never tells), such closeted tendencies seem to still heavily exist in Buffalo.

(Continued on page 4)

**LOOKING FOR INDIVIDUALS
TO HELP DISTRIBUTE PAMPHLETS AND
TO STAFF INFORMATION TABLE DURING
THE BUFFALO GAY, LESBIAN, BI &
TRANSGENDER PRIDE PARADE &
CELEBRATION PARTY,
SATURDAY, JUNE 17
AT ELMWOOD AVE. & BIDWELL PARKWAY
MORE DETAILS NEXT MONTH**



NANCY'S PERSPECTIVE

Hi ladies,

I hope it has finally quit snowing in your area. Over in Rochester it never stops. They lead the United States in total accumulation this year, and had almost twice as much as Buffalo!

Sometimes when I sit down in front of my trusty Brother SX-14 electronic typewriter, I draw a blank. Some might say I draw a lot of blanks, but don't go there! Good old Kathy says I'm the only girl she knows who still uses a typewriter. Well, excuse me! I don't own a computer, or word processor, so I will continue to plug along with what I have.

Actually, in the last two years my typewriter has been very good to me. I have written hundreds of letters to other women all over the country. Some write back, some don't. I now have a lot of photos, cards, notes, phone numbers and friends. I seem to have a way of expressing myself in written form that I don't have when I'm speaking to someone directly. Why is that? I take a great deal of satisfaction in opening my mailbox, and in amongst the junk mail, and

catalogs, is a letter from a girlfriend in Oregon, or Iowa, or Ohio. I find it interesting that no matter the locale, we all share the same feelings. I guess that should come as no surprise but I take comfort in knowing that outside of our immediate area there are a lot of great women willing to share their story. From what I've been able to learn from some of these letters is that the Buffalo Belles are a special group (but you knew that). There are a lot of cities that have no support group, and have no plans to form one. What a shame! I guess we tend to take things for granted when they are available. Don't let that happen - get to the next meeting!!

I mentioned catalogs in my mailbox. I'm happy for the post office, but sometimes I need a garbage bag to haul them all away. Thank goodness we recycle! I admit I enjoy some of them, and I do place an order from time to time, but getting on the master list was never a goal of mine. Oh well, at least I can stay current on fashion style, cut and color. That helps, doesn't it? I could go to a store, but sitting at the kitchen table browsing at my own pace isn't bad. I actually love going to the post office, standing in line, and then asking for a package I've ordered. They look at me a little strange sometimes, but I have my cover story all set about a girlfriend, and how I get to pick up things for her. I'm sure some of you have used a similar story at your post office.

Have a good May - what's left of it. Enjoy firing up your lawn mower, I know I will mine! At least I can put my snowblower away. I think!

Your sister,
Nancy

BRINGING DIGNITY TO PEOPLE'S LIVES

(continued from page 4)

"For a lot of people growing up, women didn't leave the house without lipstick and white gloves, the Joan Cleaver thing, and this is the image of femininity they grew up with" explained Gulia, a regular at the boutique.

Miss Suzi agrees, "There were a lot of expectations on women, like women should always wear high heels. If they can make rules about what women should wear, shouldn't women make rules about what they (men) should wear? And no one liked that. And guess what baby, no one is going to say what we can wear either! It's part of the empowerment process

Times are changing, and nightclubs such as Club E and Club Marcella are offering individuals with less than mainstream lifestyles a place to get together and feel comfortable and beautiful. "Femininity is about being strong, about being comfortable, and people like Joey Marcella are such a wonderful help to the transgender community, giving us all a

place to let go and have fun!" she explained. "It has nothing to do with the dresses really, though all that other stuff is fun, and of course that's what were selling here as well!"

There is no question that, in every sense of the word, Miss Suzi is a complete example of a truly feminine woman. Regardless of her main of curly brown hair (that miraculously changes to a blond bombshell ponytail later in the afternoon, a perfect example of the wig collection the boutique offers) or her meticulously lacquered nails, her philosophical, sociological and biological views on the strength of femininity in modern society are the true defining elements of a feminine soul. And judging by the women that I met while visiting Miss Suzi, every day more and more people are finding something inside themselves that they have tried not to see for years, and through the help of Miss Suzi and her discreet boutique, the beauty of a feminine personality are finally appreciated for power it truly holds.

Miss Suzi's Fantasy Fashions Boutique is located at 430 Delaware Avenue in downtown Buffalo.

TRANS COMMUNITY NEWS

OFFICER BALLOT

I'M INTERESTED IN THE FOLLOWING POSITION:

PRESIDENT (name) _____

VICE-PRESIDENT (name) _____

TREASURER (name) _____

CUT OUT AND MAIL TO: **BUFFALO BELLES**
PO BOX 1701
AMHERST, NY 14226

DEADLINE FOR SUBMISSION IS JUNE 15, 2000

THAI TRANSVESTITE FILM SPIKES AT BOX OFFICE

BANGKOK, Thailand -- A film based on the true story of a transvestite volleyball team has become a lucrative hit in Thailand since opening last week. But the director says he had more than money in mind when making "Satree Lek," or Iron Woman.

"We've made about 60 million baht (US \$1.6 million) from the show during the past 10 days," Yongyuth Thongkongthun tells Reuters. "I made the film because I appreciate their sporting talents, and I also want people to accept them for the way they are."

Sporting breasts, wigs, makeup and high heels, the team from the northern Thai town of Lampang sprang from obscurity, beating other teams to win the 1996 men's national volleyball championship. The players were a hit, drawing huge crowds wherever they played.

But their popularity and prowess didn't earn them any spots on the national team. Sporting conservatives were appalled, and the team's stars were effectively blackballed by those worried about Thailand's image abroad.

The team has disbanded now, but Thongkongthun says he hopes his film will help the powder squadron win the recognition it deserves. Maybe, he says, the movie also will alter negative perceptions of Thailand's sizeable population of *ka-toeys*, or transvestites.

TRANS DOCUMENTARIES ONLINE

New on the Net this month is Channel-T.org <http://www.channel-t.org/>, a non-profit grassroots series of transsexual documentaries intended for free distribution over the Internet via Quick-Time 4 streaming video. Host Cynthia Webster describes the documentaries on her new service as "selected specifically for folks like us, all with dignity and a sense of humor!"

Webster said, "It's our intention that Channel-T will develop into a conceptual lighthouse, or Rock of Gibraltar, of positive transgender media. We're not trying to duplicate the outstanding offerings of the many text-based Web sites involved in transgendered issues. Instead, this is the beginning of a new video network of multi-media programming from within the 'T' community itself."



LEG LOOKS

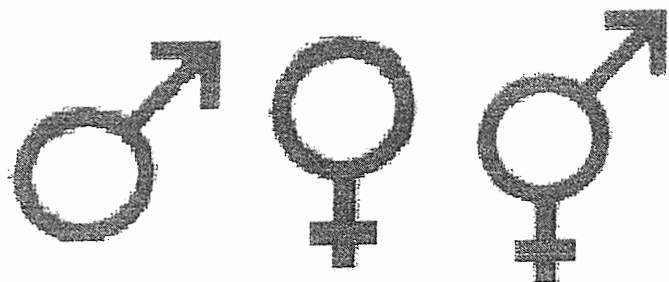
If you're looking for a little help in the hosiery department, you won't go wrong following these two guidelines:

For the most natural look, match the color of your pantyhose to the color of your arms.

Also, remember that your hosiery should be the same shade as your shoes or lighter.

COMMUNITY AND INTERPERSONAL DIFFERENCES

by Gianna E. Israel



What is it about people's differences that make it difficult for crossdressers, transsexuals and even gays to understand each other? I put some thought into this question and laughed. Why? I did so because over the years I have noticed the preceding question about differences has repeatedly arisen in so many different ways.

One of the most common things I have heard when people wrestle with understanding differences goes as follows. Transsexuals will say that crossdressers just aren't seriously committed about having a transgender identity or being part of the community. On the other hand, crossdressers will say transsexuals are too serious and push the gender envelope too far. After all, who in their right mind would abandon all their security to change gender? And both groups, especially transsexuals, will sometimes say that for all their love and support that some gays just don't "get it." In other words, some gays just can't seem to see beyond labeling us as drag queens, which can be very distressing to a transsexual woman.

When observing differences in people and their reactions, do you sometimes find the subject confusing? After 11 years of practice I still find these dynamics mystifying and intriguing. What I found helped me understand this subject better was to learn about the word "perception."

Perception comes from the word "perceive," which means "to attain awareness or understanding." This primarily comes through one's personal senses. As a result, a person's perception of others' differences comes from his or her own observations, feelings, even intuitions, and particularly experiences. No wonder the world is such a complex place.

What all this means is that typically when a crossdresser sees a transsexual, or vice versus, the observing party is drawing conclusions about the other person based on his or her own perceptions. These perceptions most commonly consist of personal experiences. Over the years I've noticed some people are able to move beyond their perceptions while others don't seem capable of doing so.

If you want a person, particularly a friend, to understand you better, it can help tremendously to talk about differences. This

means asking questions and sharing with each other about what makes you and your friend alike but also different. However, in the course of doing so, don't be surprised if even sometimes the most loving friend won't be able to understand you entirely.

It certainly is a beautiful thing when two people connect and come to understand each other's differences. However, it is also okay when two people don't understand each other on some points. After all, if people understood everything about each other they certainly would be less interesting. When people don't understand each other, nothing prevents them from keeping a friendship. After all, over the years I've developed really loving, close friendships with others who are very different than myself. I have found that it is those differences between us which add different perspectives, ideas and even dreams.

The most common concern people have when they are misunderstood is that they also are not being entirely accepted. Understandably, this is a valid concern. My suggestion, look for simplicity in answers pertaining to being accepted by others. Otherwise, you will end up creating unnecessary complications within your friendships and ultimately end up feeling less accepted by others. Acceptance is also a bizarre game we play in human relationships. I have often found that where a friend may not understand one particular facet of my life, he or she may prove to be my biggest supporter in other areas.

When pondering the subject of acceptance, be mindful that life can go pretty smoothly if you allow it. This is particularly so if you aren't being discriminated against or abuse, or if you can avoid discriminating against others who are different than you. Differences are, after all, what make us all the same because no one or very few people are exactly identical. Maybe you can accept big differences in character or identity, or maybe you can't. Perhaps others can in you, or maybe they are unwilling to learn what makes you special. I have found that people each have their own ability of trying to understand others and get along. I believe the preceding trait is what makes us most unique.

Notably, no essay on differences would be complete without mentioning the isolation that goes with feeling different from everybody else. Imagine being the only transgender person in a classroom filled with non-transgender persons. Or, imagine being the only transgender person in your neighborhood. That certainly could feel very lonely. However, this is a reality that we all must deal with, particularly if we hope to create a place for ourselves in the world. This is one primary reason I strongly suggest transgender persons socialize with other transgender individuals. Doing so provides an opportunity to hear about how others similar to you deal with these issues.

GIANNA E. ISRAEL provides nationwide telephone consultation, individual & relationship counseling, evaluations and referrals. She writes Transgender Tapestry's "Ask Gianna" column; is an AEGIS board member and HBIGDA member. She can be contacted at (415) 558-8058, at P.O. Box 424447 San Francisco, CA 94142, or via e-mail at: Gianna@counselsuite.com.

FOR A BETTER YOU...



AN APPROACH TO FEMININE SPEECH AND VOCAL TECHNIQUES FOR GENETIC MALES

by Wendy Parker (used by permission)

We're all concerned about "passing" when we go out. I prefer the term "blending in" because it's more about the comfort level of ourselves and others around us.

One important giveaway is our natural voices. Some disguise them by becoming a "mute" when they go out in public. The Marcel Marceau approach to life as pantomime. Others opt for the other extreme of vocal surgery rather than take a vow of silence. There's a sensible compromise:

This is a demonstration of techniques and principles of speaking in a more feminine manner including range, projection, modulation, inflection and speech content.

Pitch and Timbre

The biggest concept I want you to take away from all this is: higher is not better! As a matter of fact, a lower voice in a woman is considered "sexy" and was actually cultivated by actresses like Lauren Bacall and Marlene Dietrich. Women such as Bea Arthur and Tallulah Bankhead had a lower natural speaking range than most men yet they still sounded most feminine! Why?

Because of the quality or "Timbre" (pronounced tamber) of sound. For example, a flute and a trumpet can play the exact same concert pitch but have distinctly different sounds. (The wave shapes would look different on an oscilloscope due to a difference in the overtone series.)

So concentrate not so much on pitch as on the "timbre" of the sound. You can do this by softening your speech and "placing" your voice in the head rather than the chest.

Vocal "cords" are actually vocal "folds" of skin and very sensitive to abuse. Therefore, minimize shouting and smoking which will irritate the vocal cords and actually lower your pitch.

If you feel you must raise your pitch, first find your median speaking voice by softly humming and raise "that" pitch three or four tones for a "new" midrange reference point. Any more than that will give an unnatural "Minnie Mouse" squeaky falsetto effect.

The fact is that you have lived your life as male a long time. The objective is to learn how to speak a new language called "feminine." Don't mind that you do it with a masculine "accent" You'll still be understood.

A morning warm-up routine:

1. Neck relaxing exercises will relieve tension in the neck and therefore the "voice box" or larynx. Slowly rotate your head in large circles one direction, then the other.
2. You can also relax the vocal cords directly by singing up and down the scale in a kind of "Bronx cheer," that is letting the lips flutter (as if you were saying "brrrrr"). This is best done in a hot shower where the steam will have a beneficial effect on the vocal cords. This is a practice used by many professional singers and vocal coaches.

Modulation

Feminine speech should be "musical" and lilting. Like music, melody and rhythm play a large part in "modulating" your voice to a "sing-song" approach. You can widen your range in speech to use three tones up and down from your "new" reference point. (Men, by contrast, often use only one or two tones up or down, almost closer to a monotone.)

Like music, rhythm and cadences (or pauses) in speech are important to feminine speaking. Slow your speech down if you tend to speak rapidly and elongate the vowels. Southern dialects naturally sound feminine because women elongate vowels, men tend to shorten them. (Remember the character Blanche Dubois in "Streetcar Named Desire" and how she has "always depended on the kindness of strangers.") (Say: How ya'll doin' in a breathy, feminine manner, or "where ya'll goin'?)

Inflection and Content

Also try ending sentences with an upwards inflection as if you turned a statement into a question. Women often hedge their bet in making a definitive statement as in "It's awfully cold, isn't it?" or "they have a very good team, don't they?" or "don't you think?"

Women also tend to use more qualifiers in speech to exaggerate a point. For example: "that's a very lovely dress she has on, or "it certainly is terribly hot today, isn't it?" In her book "Speaking As A Woman", Alison Lang refers to a new vocabulary and choices of words. Speaking this new language of

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

"feminine" requires a new or altered use of descriptive adjectives such as "charming, lovely, sweet, darling, in place of: pleasant, pretty, nice, great, etc. For example: "Isn't she just a sweet, precious child?" or "What a charming place you have." or "What a darling outfit!"

Be aware of your diction and articulation. Women, in general, tend to enunciate their words better, giving special attention to hard, ending consonants like P's, T's, and K's. (Try saying: Picking a chicken is certainly not to my liking.") Men tend to slur their words or mumble a bit more.

Lowering your overall speaking volume and softening the voice always helps. It also never hurts to give just a bit of Marilyn Monroe type "breathiness" if you don't overdo it.

Coughing or clearing your throat can sometimes be a giveaway because this is a sound that clearly originates in the chest. Or objective is to have sounds originate in the head voice so try and minimize this by shorter coughs, covering your mouth or just excusing yourself and leaving the room if necessary.

Body Language

Body language is all important to blending in as a woman and enhances the overall believability. In general, be more expressive in gesturing with your hands but keep the body limbs (knees and elbows) pulled inward taking up less space. Men are much more "territorial" and tend to use up more physical space whereas women will usually present a less aggressive, non threatening posture, especially when sitting.

Women tend to face each other and make more eye contact whereas men tend to find direct eye contact much more threatening, especially in such a homophobic society as ours. When sitting, women often tend to "lean into" the conversation when sharing something important. Leaning forward in men's conversations would tend to threaten their "space" more. Women are also less afraid to touch each other and make physical contact like touching a shoulder or elbow, especially when expressing sympathy or reassurance. A woman's overall posture is better, where sitting men are usually less aligned.

A smile is always more feminine, be polite and courteous always!

Content of Speech

Content of speech is all important! Women tend to reinforce what's being said in a conversation rather than always bringing the subject back to themselves! Good conversation is being a good listener! Women tend to be more empathetic, quality listeners. The term "active listening" requires more involvement on the part of the listener. Men tend to just tune out and use others' conversations time just to formulate what they are going to say next as if to discount what others are saying as less important. It's been said that a man's idea of good conversation is "speaking monologues with witnesses."

Rene Chevalier once said, "you can always tell a G.G. (Genetic Girl) at a crossdresser's meeting ... she's the only one listening!"

In Deborah Tannen's book *"You Just Don't Understand"* (Morrow Press), she says the reason women are more "quality" listeners is that they learn at an early age to place a higher emphasis on quality conversation more than boys. Men's speech asserts independence and status in order to be on top of the pecking order. In a mixed group of men and women, men tend to dominate and interrupt the conversation statistically 80 percent of the time more than women!

As young girls, women tend to place more importance on intimate chats and sharing personal secrets with a "best friend" or confidant.

Dr. Tannen points out in her studies that boys play in bigger, hierarchical groups with specific pecking orders, whereas girls develop closer friendships in smaller groups and use conversation to "connect" and bond through language. Girls often show a stronger verbal ability than boys and recent studies on brain development reinforces this theory.

Women usually want their men to be as good a listener as their "best girlfriends" and focus on the emotional intent of what they are saying. Even though wives desire this "best friend" kind of talk with their spouse, a study shows that they seldom think of their husbands as "best friends." Men often list their wives as their "best friend" while women usually refer to another woman that way.

Tannen also points out that women usually have a better developed verbal ability and like to use conversation to share problems and elicit sympathy whereas men prefer to use conversation to negotiate, solve problems or raise their status. It is a confrontational versus sympathetic approach.

The "men in dresses" conversation syndrome is usually bragging about how rich or powerful one is. It is not a feminine approach. Men often talk about business and status with other men and women talk about people and relationships with other women. Conversation content changes in a "mixed" group.

As I mentioned, studies show that men interrupt, switch topics, and interrupt 80 percent more than women, who tend to have a more personal approach with more constant, reassuring listening noises or responses (like "uh-huh," "yeah," or "oh, I know just how you must feel"). These comments show more involvement and more empathy.

The key thing to notice in men's and women's conversational approaches (outside of business) is that men are problem solvers and women are looking for or giving sympathy.

Phrases like "Oh, that must be just awful," or "I understand this must be a difficult time for you" signal involvement and concern. The key for all of us is to become a better and more sympathetic listener!

(Continued on page 9)



SPRING CLEANING TRANS-FLEA APPAREL MARKET
AT THE MAY 6 BUFFALO BELLES MEETING
NOW'S THE TIME TO CLEAN OUT YOUR OLD,
(BUT STILL GOOD) CLOTHES, SHOES,
JEWELRY, WIGS, ETC. AND SELL, TRADE OR
GIVE THEM AWAY! SO, BRING IT ON DOWN.

(Continued from page 8)

Mental Attitude

It is not always easy to erase years of "body language memory" but something you can try is to close your eyes and in a quiet moment visualize and "hear" yourself saying things in a graceful and melodic manner. You can approach this as "theater of the mind" where you watch yourself interacting in a social situation with others in a feminine manner. In this way one can almost "mentally" raise your chest voice to the head resonance without really changing pitch. (In opera, this is known as projecting "into the mask.")

Physiology

It stands to reason that if you are a "tall girl" as many genetic women are, your vocal cords quite probably are proportionately longer and perhaps a little thicker. Many taller women have naturally longer vocal cords and therefore a slightly lower pitch or vibration. You remember from high school physics that a longer string has a lower pitch and a shorter string has a higher pitch. A thicker string of equal length has the same pitch but a different quality or "timbre" of sound. During puberty, male hormones cause the vocal cords to thicken and, like the thicker string on a guitar, sound "different" than a thin string of equal length (and tension).

Role Models

It is most helpful to have a feminine vocal role model to emulate. If you have a friend or a favorite actress or personality whose speech delights you, tape them and mimic or "track" along with them. My personal favorite is Sigourney Weaver (a tall girl with a lower, sultry voice). I tape segments of dialogue from video rentals and repeat dialogue along with them. (I love to use my practice tape in the car when I'm all alone!) The braver souls might try taping your own voice and listen to the comparison. (Try not to be too judgmental or hard on yourself).

Vocal Surgery

Vocal surgery is not preferable and should only really be used as a last resort. The results are not always satisfactory nor are they guaranteed!

There are basically two different types of surgical practices:

1. A surgeon can cut off part of the vocal fold to "shorten" it. Like the shorter string, this only "cuts off" the lower frequencies and does not add higher frequencies. In effect, this only "shortens" your overall vocal range by eliminating lower tones so that you can't accidentally "slip" into a lower voice.

2. A few surgeons can actually "thin" the vocal fold using laser surgery. Like a "thin" string, this changes the overall "quality" of sound. For the more serious "surgery junkies," a combination approach can be used.

If you are already cross living full time, you don't tend to use your lower tones anyway and it forces your "body memory" to simply get used to using the upper register. (They say if you don't use it, you lose it.)

Don't confuse a "tracheal shave" with "vocal surgery." A "trach" shave reduces the size of the "Adam's apple" only and is considered a cosmetic surgical practice for those with large Adam's apples. This is considered a safe and routine practice by cosmetic surgeons.

Reassignment "Thinking"

Finally, the whole secret is in a shift of mental attitude or "reassignment thinking."

Try to have a positive outlook on life and cultivate good self esteem. Be confident, non-defensive, open to life and interested in the other people around you. You might even try quietly singing by yourself around the house.

Be happy with your lot in life and love yourself a bit. (Caution! This attitude is contagious and may rub off on those around you.)

Enjoy life, and others will enjoy (and accept) you. Love and good luck with your "new" voice!

(Wendy Parker is the author of a popular vocal instruction book for professional singers)



COMING EVENTS



DUE TO THE POSSIBILITY OF LAST MINUTE
CHANGES, CALL TO VERIFY THE TIME AND
PLACE OF EVENTS

- | | |
|------------------------|--|
| MAY 6 | BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm (note date change) |
| MAY 6 | ROCHESTER CD NETWORK MEETING 6:30pm |
| MAY 6 | PEP MEETING 7pm – 10pm
Compton's After Dark, 1239 Niagara St. Buffalo |
| MAY 12 – 14 | DIVA LAS VEGAS
Las Vegas, Nevada |
| MAY 20 | IMPERIAL COURT OF BUFFALO CORONATION 2000
Buffalo Convention Center – 8:00pm – Midnight |
| MAY 27 | ERIE SISTERS MEETING
Erie, Pennsylvania |
| JUNE 3 | ROCHESTER CD NETWORK MEETING 6:30pm |
| JUNE 4 | AIDS WALK – 11am – 1pm
Delaware Park, Buffalo – for info call 847-0340 |
| JUNE 7-11 | BE ALL 2000 – Cincinnati, Ohio |
| JUNE 10 | BUFFALO BELLES MEETING 6:00pm |
| JUNE 17 | BUFFALO PRIDE PARADE & CELEBRATION
Elmwood Ave. & Bidwell Parkway, Buffalo |
| SEPT. 26-OCT. 1 | SOUTHERN COMFORT
Atlanta, Georgia |
| OCTOBER 5 – 8 | 4th INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON CROSSDRESSING,
SEX & GENDER, Philadelphia, PA (for info call 610 -975-9119) |
| OCTOBER 18 – 25 | FANTASIA FAIR
Provincetown, Massachusetts |
| NOVEMBER 9 – 12 | WESTERN BELLES ROUNDUP 2000
Milford (The Poconos), Pennsylvania (see brochure next month) |
| NOVEMBER 16 -19 | LAKE ERIE GALA 2000
Erie, Pennsylvania |